

SPOTLIGHTS

College Experiences in the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative

An Evaluation Activity

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Participate | Collaborate | Innovate

This vignette is the second in a series of college spotlights relating the experiences and benefits gained from participation in the Partnership Resource Team (PRT) and from the goal setting activities using the framework of indicators under the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI).

This document represents an evaluation activity with two objectives: First, to share the experiences of the participating institutions with the field to build collective learning; and second, to help gauge the effectiveness and significance of the IEPI components.

The vignette is based on structured interviews with the faculty and staff at Shasta College and a review of the documents completed as part of the PRT process. The focus of this edition of Spotlights centers on Shasta College's efforts to build value in its existing curriculum and meet the previously unmet needs of those in the college community who are pursuing transfer and degree completion. Future editions of this publication will highlight the unique stories of additional colleges.



Beyond Mere Compliance: Adding Value, Meeting the Mission

Shasta College's decision to participate in the PRT technical assistance component of the IEPI was an easy one. "We knew we had an accreditation visit not far into the future, and we have had an 'uneven' experience with accreditation in the past. So we thought that working with PRTs would be a good way to help us address some areas we knew we needed to work on," a Shasta College leader noted.

Indeed, one of the express goals of the IEPI is to provide accreditation support to client institutions seeking assistance in order to reduce the number of sanctions.

While accreditation concerns may have been the catalyst that prompted Shasta College's decision to participate in the PRT process in the first place, the college identified a number of broad areas of focus beyond mere accreditation compliance when it submitted its letter of interest.

For example, "We shared the same challenges with respect to enrollment management discussed by the Barstow College leaders in the first edition of Spotlights," noted one Shasta College leader. "Like Barstow, Shasta is a rural institution and our students face difficulties just getting to one of our locations." Another leader related, "We have built quite an extensive online program because of our rural location, but we needed to do something more, something different."

UNMET NEEDS

The access to viable curriculum is particularly relevant for the region's transfer-bound students. One program leader observed, "While there is a local private college and

THE COMPONENTS OF THE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE



- Develop a framework of indicators and college/district goals.
- Make Technical Assistance Teams (called Partnership Resource Teams, or PRTs) available to institutions that express interest in receiving assistance.
- Enhance professional development opportunities for colleges and districts related to institutional effectiveness.
- Provide access to resources, tools and best practices



The program features accelerated classes offered in two formats: hybrid (in-person one night a week plus online instruction) and purely online. This structure allows a student to complete their associates degree in under twenty months.

examination of enrollment management more than just trying to increase numbers or adding online courses. We wanted to make it about Shasta College,” Wyse observed.

ACTING ON HUNCHES

As part of the PRT discussions, Shasta faculty and staff developed a couple of hunches. First, perhaps the college could do a better job of showing the community at large that Shasta is a viable way to get an education, especially for those students who want to pursue a bachelor’s degree. Second, maybe the college could improve its outreach to those in the community who struggle to attend college through traditional means and for whom distance education is not a viable option.

“We have done a good job building an online program here at Shasta, but we knew we could do more,” Wyse explained.

Using the PRT process, Shasta College took two separate and distinct tacks based on the hunches about reasons for the downward enrollment trends. First, the college decided to increase the perceived value of a Shasta education in the eyes of residents by offering an honors program. Wyse summarized the approach this way: “We wanted to convey to our community that a Shasta education is a quality education. We know it is, we wanted to make sure the community knew it as well.”

Second, the college decided to tap into a population of potential students whose needs were just not being met through the existing course and program offerings. “We looked at the census data for our region and we saw that a good percentage of the population in the area, particularly those over 25, had some college but no degree,” a college leader noted. “Why aren’t they finishing, and

how could we reach out to them? We saw it as a way to both increase student enrollment and better meet our mission.”

BUILDING VALUE

To increase the value of the Shasta education in the eyes of the community, the college developed an express objective under its Innovation and Effectiveness Plan (I&EP) to develop and implement a college scholars program. In fall 2015, Shasta College faculty developed concept proposals and presented the idea to the institution’s academic senate for consideration and action.

The Scholars Program was approved as a distinctive academic community within the larger Shasta College setting. “We want to attract students on the way to four-year colleges by demonstrating a rigorous, academic pathway that will prepare students for a baccalaureate degree and beyond,” one leader remarked.

The program’s philosophy is to promote mastery of subject matter demonstrated through writing, research, critical thinking, and analysis. College faculty and administrative leaders have targeted spring 2017 for the first cohort.

To be admitted into the Scholars Program, new freshman and students with fewer than 18 units must have a cumulative high school grade point average of 3.0 and qualify for English 1A, the first course in transfer-level English. Continuing and returning students with at least 12 and not more than 30 UC transferable units

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-President Wyse



Located in Redding, CA, about 160 miles north of Sacramento, Shasta College serves the residents of Tehama, Shasta and Trinity counties, blanketing approximately 10,000 square miles.

must have a college GPA of at least 3.0 and qualify for (or successfully pass) English 1A. At the completion of the program, participants receive a scholar’s certification.

The Scholars Program is patterned after similar honors-type programs with benefits such as stimulating curriculum, small class size and engaging learning settings, scholarships and internships, and transcript and special recognition. Regular, systematic counselor contact

with the scholars is a key component to the continued enrollment in the program.

“The program is new and we are still working out the kinks, but we believe that over time, students will see Shasta as a viable option when considering transfer, particularly to colleges and universities throughout the state,” said a college leader.

SOME COLLEGE, NO DEGREE

Shasta College created a second objective in the I&EP to move the college beyond mere compliance: develop and implement an adult learner re-entry program.

“We have a surprisingly large percentage of people in our region over the age of 25 who, according to census data shared with us by our researcher, had some college but no degree,” Wyse said. “When you think about this fact, coupled with the physical limitations in attending one of our sites, you wonder, ‘why are these individuals not completing?’” one program lead added.

The result? The creation of the Shasta College Accelerated College Education (ACE) program. ACE is designed to meet the target population of working adults who have some college and no degree, who are motivated and want to attend college full time, and who are ready to take college-level coursework with a schedule and in a learning environment that better meet their needs.

The program features accelerated classes offered in two formats:

THE SHASTA PLAN

DATA INTEGRITY

- Ensure critical data is reported appropriately
- Fully implement and use the local database system
- Ensure data input processes are clearly defined with timelines, accountability, and monitoring

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

- Implement data cleanup for critical information needs
- Develop a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP)
- Build internal enrollment management capacity

online four-year institutions that recruit Shasta students, distance remains a major challenge for our students who wish to transfer.”

Thinking differently, Shasta College leaders wanted to increase enrollment, but with a purpose. “Online education is not a solution for everyone. The other college choices in the area are limited. We wanted to do something about this,” concluded Superintendent/President Joe Wyse.

Located in Redding, CA, about 160 miles north of Sacramento, Shasta College serves the residents of Tehama, Shasta, and Trinity counties, blanketing more than 10,000 square miles. Chico State, the nearest public four-year institution, is 70 miles away from Redding and nearly 140 miles away from residents in parts of Shasta College’s district.

The challenge of accessing college, whether in person or through online education, has been made all the more acute for Shasta in the last four years. “Although enrollment is up nearly 3.5 percent for fall 2016, our enrollment has declined over time,” Wyse noted. Indeed, the 2014 Shasta College Fact Book approximates a 20 percent decline in both headcount and full-time equivalent students since the 2009/10 academic year.

“We wanted to make our

THE VALUE IN VISITS

- The chance to interact collegially with peers
- Validation of college thinking from nonjudgmental experts
- Developing a plan at the outset clarified the project goals
- The connection of resources and experts
- Pacing of visits gave time to collect thoughts
- The opportunity of multiple looks at the challenges to develop a fuller scope
- A team of experts tailored to meet the college's objectives

hybrid (in-person two nights a week plus online instruction) and purely online. This structure allows students to complete their associate degree in under 20 months.

"The older adults simply cannot take courses the way younger students do, and some of the private online colleges are simply too expensive," a project lead observed.

ACE is a pathway to a four-year degree. Shasta is currently developing a four-year degree completion program called BOLD (Bachelor's through Online and Local Degrees). Transfer-seeking adults have the option of an Associate in Science for Transfer in Business or an Associate in Arts for Transfer

in Psychology pathway. Those who are not currently interested in transferring to a four-year college or university have the option of pursuing an Associate in Science in Business or an Associate in Science in Social Sciences.

"There will be more majors in the future, but we wanted to get some immediate traction, so we selected degrees we thought most students might be interested in pursuing. The selection of the transfer degree pathway has been robust," a program lead was quick to note.

The course delivery model is intensive with the rigor of a 17-week course compressed into a 5- or 8-week period. "Students take two courses at a time, and these courses are not any easier than the traditional courses. As a result, we make sure that we provide students with information on the expectations, technology, and time commitment needed to be successful," the lead added.

Wyse pointed out, "Our first cohort started in June 2016 and there are a lot of moving parts with creating the curriculum, finding faculty who want to work in this type of program, etc. So we focused on college success, college writing, computer literacy, and core content courses for the students."

Students who participate in the ACE program are offered the full range of student support services, such as advising and financial aid. A program lead continued, "It will be challenging for the college to continually rethink how we provide

student support because it is challenging for us to think beyond traditional ways of attending college. The answers are not in front of us yet. We will need to do some thinking."

FINAL THOUGHTS

What is clear is that the experimental approach demonstrated by Shasta faculty and staff as a result of their work with the PRT goes beyond the traditional way colleges look at institutional effectiveness and improvement.

"The enrollment management challenges that community colleges face in general and here at Shasta College in particular require us to really think about how we currently do things and to be willing to try something new. The PRT team helped us frame this approach," Wyse concluded.

Working with a peer team to brainstorm these new lines of thinking was beneficial to the college. Wyse noted, "The process was very positive for us. The PRT members linked us with colleges who were already doing what we wanted to try. And the college colleagues that we outreached to were very generous with their time in working with us."

The college plans to closely monitor the progress on these innovations, for both increased student success and increased college enrollment. ■

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*Robert Pacheco, Ed.D.,
External Evaluator
BOB@PACH3.CO*



CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY
COLLEGES CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
916.445.8752

MATTHEW C. LEE, Ph.D.
Project Director

THERESA TENA
Vice Chancellor, Institutional
Effectiveness
CCC Chancellor's Office

BARRY GRIBBONS, Ph.D.
Deputy Chancellor
College of the Canyons



COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS/
SANTA CLARITA CCD
SANTA CLARITA, CALIFORNIA
661.362.5500